United Nations A/AC.183/SR.311

General Assembly

Distr.: General
1 October 2008

Original: English

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 311th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 2 September 2008, at 4 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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08-49368 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chairman** said that on 22 July 2008, the Security Council had met to consider the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. In his capacity as Chairman of the Committee, he had spoken about the latter's serious concern over Israel's continuing settlement activities in violation of its road map obligations. Since the Annapolis Conference, Israel had announced plans to build more than 3,000 apartments in and around East Jerusalem. The settlement blocks, together with the wall being built by Israel largely on Palestinian land, severed Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, thus posing an enormous challenge to the permanent status negotiations.

3. On 6 August 2008, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had met in Jerusalem, along with their negotiating teams. The two leaders had discussed concerns about the political upheaval in Israel and its impact on peace talks. A second meeting had taken place in Jerusalem on 31 August 2008.

4. Upon learning of the passing of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish on 9 August 2008, the Chairman had sent a letter to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas expressing the heartfelt condolences of the Committee to Mr. Darwish's family and to the Palestinian people.

5. On 25 August 2008, Israel had released 198 prisoners, who had been welcomed by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at the Ramallah Muqata`a. Some 11,000 Palestinians remained in Israeli prisons.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

6. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that the situation on the ground had not improved visibly. According to the Peace Now movement, settlement activities had accelerated and intensified, in contravention of international law, of Security Council and other resolutions, of Israel's road map commitments and of the spirit of the Annapolis Conference. In June and July, the Group of Arab States and others had held negotiations with the Security Council in order to persuade the Council to assume its responsibilities and to adopt a simple resolution similar to the one put forward by the Quartet, calling for the cessation of settlement activities and the dismantling of outposts. A draft resolution had been submitted in due form to the Security Council, but the Council had concluded that it was not ready to adopt it. He hoped the Council would re-examine the issue and take appropriate action in the future, if it failed to do so and Israel's settlement activities continued, the entire peace process could collapse.

7. While welcoming Israel's release of 198 Palestinian prisoners, he underlined that hundreds more had been detained and that thousands remained in Israeli prisons. The recent release of certain prisoners had nonetheless been particularly significant in that Israel was relaxing its previously intransigent stance on releasing prisoners "with blood on their hands".

8. The Gaza siege continued even though the ceasefire remained in effect. In that connection, he expressed appreciation for the civil society organizations that regularly transported ailing or otherwise needy people out of Gaza. Such organizations would continue their work until the tragedy of the collective punishment of all Gaza residents was over and the borders were reopened to the flow of people and goods.

9. The imminent replacement of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had created a tense situation; however, the Palestinian people were willing to deal with any Israeli leadership in the future as long as it observed the principles of negotiation based on the relevant point of reference and the Madrid principles, such as "land for peace", as well as relevant Security Council resolutions, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. The meetings held between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the Palestinian leadership had not been fruitful owing to Israel's unwillingness to deal with problems adequately. As had been reiterated many times, either the Palestinian people would settle all major issues with Israel or there would be no agreement.

10. Other meetings had recently taken place in Washington, D.C., and efforts were being made

through a mediation process led by United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to reach an agreement before the end of President Bush's term of office. The Palestinian people were negotiating in good faith but it was difficult to be optimistic given the other parties' inflexibility. Meetings had also been held in Ramallah with United States Secretary of State Rice and other leaders, but no peace treaty had been produced as envisaged under the Annapolis peace process. Palestine would continue to strive towards an agreement that would give the Palestinian people their own independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State in the areas occupied by Israel in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to find a just and acceptable solution to the refugee question on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

11. In recent months, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had launched a reconciliation initiative in accordance with the Yemeni initiative aimed at restoring national unity and preparing the Palestinian people for difficult times ahead.

Request by Nicaragua for membership in the Committee

12. **The Chairman** informed the Committee that he had received a letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Permanent Mission of Nicaragua to the United Nations expressing the Nicaraguan Government's desire to become a full member of the Committee. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to that request.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that Nicaragua wished to show its support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people with regard to their tragic situation as well as their heroic resistance to the Israeli occupation and their fight for an independent, sovereign country with its own Government and clearly defined borders. Since 1979, Nicaragua had shown full support for the Palestinian people in the various United Nations organs and in all human rights matters.

15. The current situation of the Palestinian people was intolerable; a fair, sustainable and peaceful solution must be found in order to put an end to the Israeli occupation and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination as a sovereign, independent State. Nicaragua looked forward to contributing to that process.

16. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) thanked Nicaragua for its commitment and willingness to participate, and urged other delegations to follow Nicaragua's example.

United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace and United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Santiago, 11-13 December 2008 (Working Paper No. 4)

17. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to the provisional programme for the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace and United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held in Santiago from 11 to 13 December 2008 (Working Paper No. 4).

18. The objective of the Meeting was to encourage broad international involvement, including that of Latin American and Caribbean States, in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace and to find a solution to the conflict based on a shared vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. From a regional perspective, the participants would look into ways of consolidating and synergizing current international peace efforts. They would also consider how Latin American and Caribbean States could effectively contribute to such efforts through participation in national and intergovernmental mechanisms.

19. Internationally renowned experts, both Israeli and Palestinian, parliamentarians, representatives of United Nations Members, observers and organizations, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the media would be invited to participate.

20. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace and United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, to be held in Santiago from 11 to 13 December 2008.

21. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

United Nations A/AC.183/SR.312

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 October 2008

Original: English

Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 312th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 6 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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Developments in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly

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08-53635 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

2. **The Chairman**, after informing the Committee that the General Assembly had appointed Nicaragua to the Committee and welcoming the new member, informed members that on 16 September 2008, the Palestinian President had met with the Israeli Prime Minister to discuss permanent status issues under negotiation and that, on 25 September 2008, he had met with the President of the United States of America, who had pledged to continue working towards the creation of a viable Palestinian State.

3. At its meeting on 22 September 2008, while acknowledging Israel's security concerns, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee had noted with concern that access and movement restrictions were continuing to constrain Palestinian economic development, notwithstanding the budgetary support provided by the international community.

4. On 18 September 2008, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process had briefed the Security Council on the situation on the ground. At the request of Saudi Arabia, the Council had met on 26 September 2008 to address the issue of Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and, that same day, the Diplomatic Quartet had issued a statement calling upon the parties to continue their efforts to conclude an agreement before the end of the year and condemning both settler violence against Palestinian civilians and acts of terrorism against Israelis.

Developments in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

5. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) noted that, despite the recent flurry of political activity on the Palestine question, the Annapolis process had thus far failed to deliver the promised political settlement. The parties should nonetheless continue their efforts to that end. He hoped that a new United States administration would galvanize the peace process, and that his Government would find a partner equally ready to negotiate in good faith on the Israeli side.

6. The Egyptian Government was working to facilitate reconciliation between Palestinian factions, with a view to achieving political unity within Palestine. The League of Arab States would take action based on the results of Egyptian mediating efforts. Given the considerable efforts being invested in the peace process since the Annapolis summit it might be possible to put an end to the Israeli occupation, establish an independent, sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital and bring about a just resolution of the Palestine refugee question in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

7. Despite the international consensus on the need for Israel to put an immediate halt to settlement activity and dismantle its West Bank outposts, there was no indication that Israel was planning to change its policy. The numerous checkpoints — some 600 in number — in the West Bank, and the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip, were making Palestinian economic development virtually impossible. Moreover, the continued presence of settlements in the West Bank effectively impeded negotiations. Israel must lift the blockade on Gaza and implement the Agreement on Movement and Access and the international community must intensify its pressure on Israel, so as to bring about a change in Israel's behaviour and in its approach to final status negotiations.

8. His Government would not accept any partial agreements; any settlement reached must satisfactorily address all key final status-related issues, namely, borders, the status of Jerusalem, Palestine refugees, Israeli settlements, water and security. He hoped that the new Israeli Prime Minister would heed the encouraging — albeit late — conclusion arrived at by the incumbent on the necessity of withdrawal to pre-1967 borders. Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, along with the establishment of a State of Palestine and a just solution to the Palestine refugee question would lead to normalization of Israeli relations with all Arab and Muslim nations; that, in turn, would bring about a dramatic change in conditions throughout the Middle East.

Consideration of the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/2008/CRP.2)

9. **Mr. Borg** (Malta), Rapporteur, introducing the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly, drew particular attention to paragraphs 92 through 102 and said that, in accordance with established practice,

the Secretariat would continue to update the draft as necessary, in consultation with the Rapporteur.

10. **Mr. Al-Allaf** (Observer for Jordan), making a general comment, said that the Committee played a pivotal role in documenting the facts relating to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, not least in the context of the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in peaceful coexistence with Israel and other neighbouring States. In that connection, he noted that the will of the Palestinian people remained unbroken, notwithstanding the 60 years of arbitrary Israeli practices to which they had been subjected since Al-Nakba.

11. Highlighting two issues of particular concern to his Government, he urged the Committee to focus on Israeli settlement activities, which posed a major obstacle to the peace process, and on the excavations under way in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa mosque, notably around Bab al-Magharibah. Those excavations threatened not only to destroy the foundations of the mosque but also to alter its very character. Another fear was that the area might in future be used by Israel for military purposes. With a view to preserving the Palestinian and Islamic heritage of such an important monument for Muslims worldwide, his Government had brought the matter to the attention of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the latter had subsequently called for a halt to the excavations.

12. **Mr. Falouh** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic), supported by **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine), proposed that, in the fourth line of paragraph 24, the word "strongly" should be inserted before the word "condemned".

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **The Chairman** said that if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft report as orally amended.

15. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

16. **The Chairman** announced that one staff member from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Palestinian Authority had commenced the Committee's 2008 training programme for such staff at the Division of Palestinian Rights and that a second was expected to participate. Now in its thirteenth year, the programme was designed to familiarize young Palestinian professionals with the work of the United Nations in order to enhance their understanding of its goals and activities. Twenty-five such officers had thus far benefited from the programme.

17. **Mr. Dorani** (Department of Public Information) added that nine Palestinian journalists were shortly due to commence a six-week training programme run by the Department. A total of 120 Palestinian journalists had benefited from that programme thus far.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.